

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard**



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## **Attorney General to conduct covert inspections of tobacco sellers to squelch sales to minors**

(Phoenix, Arizona—December 18, 2003) Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced plans to conduct statewide compliance checks of Arizona's tobacco retailers in an effort to reduce retail tobacco sales and access to youth. Under Arizona law, the sale or furnishing of tobacco products to people under 18, as well as the purchase or possession of such products by persons under 18, is a crime, subject to prosecution.

Approximately 80 percent of adult smokers begin smoking before age 18. Every day nearly 4,000 young people under 18 try their first cigarette. Approximately 23% of Arizona high school students say they smoke. The average age for Arizona kids to try cigarettes for the first time is 12.5, an unacceptable statistic, according to Goddard.

"I am committed to reducing youth tobacco use in Arizona," said Goddard. "This new round of inspections will create a statewide law enforcement presence, placing retailers on notice that they are being monitored to ensure compliance with Arizona's youth tobacco laws."

Special agents with the Attorney General's Office will begin covert inspections throughout the state immediately.